

**MANSFIELD DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
Thursday, May 7, 2015  
Mansfield Town Hall  
Town Council Chambers**

**4:00 PM**

**MINUTES**

Present: Steve Bacon, Harry Birkenruth, Tom Callahan, Mona Friedland, Brid Grant, Matt Hart, Riley Hasson, George Jones, Mike Kirk, Paul McCarthy, Toni Moran, Steve Rogers, Paul Shapiro, and Bill Simpson

Staff: Cynthia van Zelm, Sarah Delia, Partnership attorney John Zaccaro

**1. Call to Order**

Vice President Steve Bacon called the meeting to order at 4:02 pm.

**2. Opportunity for Public to Comment**

There was no public comment.

**3. Approval of Minutes of April 2, 2015 and Minutes of Special Meeting of April 14, 2015**

Paul Shapiro made a motion to approve the minutes of April 2, 2015. George Jones seconded the motion. Mona Friedland and Harry Birkenruth abstained. The motion was approved with the abstentions.

Paul Shapiro made a motion to approve the minutes of April 14, 2015. Matt Hart seconded the motion. Mona Friedland, Steve Bacon and Paul McCarthy abstained. The motion was approved with the abstentions.

**4. Executive Director Report**

Ms. van Zelm said the invitations have gone out for the Town Square donor event on May 29. She asked Board members to please RSVP for this event. The musical guest will be Oh, Cassius!

She said the Partnership, along with the Town of Mansfield, UConn, and master developer LeylandAlliance, have been recognized for its work on the planning of Storrs Center, by the CT

Main Street Center. This is the Partnership's fourth Award of Excellence from CT Main Street. Ms. van Zelm will be attending the awards ceremony on June 8 along with Kathleen Paterson and Mayor Betsy Paterson. She asked other Board members to let her know if they want to attend. Ms. van Zelm commended Ms. K. Paterson for all her hard work.

Ms. van Zelm said Storrs Center has also been chosen as Best New Downtown in Yankee Magazine. Ms. van Zelm congratulated Bill Simpson for the Co-op Bookstore at Storrs Center and the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry's awards of "Best in Class Retail" and "Best in Cultural Development Project" by the Connecticut Real Estate Exchange.

Ms. van Zelm reported that the Oaks on the Square are two leases away from being fully leased. The Oaks on the Square office will be moving to VS-2. They will have a two bedroom model and a studio model. The start of move-in for the new leases is August 16 and will last a week.

Mr. Hart and Ms. van Zelm updated the Town Council on the proposal for the Partnership to take over the management of the Nash Zimmer Transportation Center. An agreement between the Partnership and the Town is being drafted.

Ms. van Zelm called attention to the communications in the Board packet, specifically Mike Kirk's response to the Town Council's comments on the UConn Master Plan; a letter from Bill Simpson regarding his possible conflict of interest in being on the Partnership Board and managing a retail business in Storrs Center; and a letter written to the Planning and Zoning Commission encouraging the Commission to assign a mixed-use land use designation to the parcel of land at the corner of Route 195 and South Eagleville Road, in the next Plan of Conservation and Development.

Ms. van Zelm passed around the volunteer list for the Partnership's table at UConn Orientation and the John E. Jackman Tour de Mansfield Bike Tour and asked Board members to sign up for a time and date. She also said that the Partnership would not be able to have a table unless it was fully staffed for all the Orientation dates.

Steve Rogers asked about parking at Storrs Center, specifically about the gated surface lot behind Main Street Homes. Ms. van Zelm said the lot will be for the residents of the new apartments that open in August. Ms. van Zelm said that some spaces in the parking garage are currently taken up by construction workers and they have been instructed to park above the 2<sup>nd</sup> gate so that customers can have the spots on the lower floors. Ms. van Zelm said that master developer LeylandAlliance who manages the parking through its agent LAZ Parking is also looking at other solutions for parking for construction workers including at Farrell Fields in the summer, the UConn lots near the Dog Lane buildings for the summer, and the Greek Center. Brid Grant mentioned that the Puppeteers of America conference will be at UConn during August and there will be an additional 500 people in the area for that event.

Tom Callahan said that arrangements for parking for construction workers should be arranged per the contract they are working under. If this is having a deleterious effect on the parking garage and local businesses, the master developer should address this issue. Ms. van Zelm said that Leyland is trying to find solutions and is frustrated as well by the difficulties in implementation. Mr. Callahan emphasized that any teeth would be in agreements with the developer/new owners to enforce parking restrictions.

Mr. Bacon praised the Department of Public Works for the winter work in clearing snow and keeping roads passable. He suggested that a letter to the Director of Public Works, John Carrington, be sent commending him and his staff. Ms. van Zelm mentioned that Stix and Stones also worked on clearing sidewalks and the parking garage. The Town Public Works crew worked on the roads, and the Town Square. Mr. Callahan suggested a letter to both parties, commending them on their hard work.

Mr. Hart announced that the annual Town Meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 12 at 7:00 pm at the Mansfield Middle School. He said that overall expenditures are up by 3.1 percent. There are some significant changes to this year's budget. There was a revaluation conducted in 2014 which resulted in an 8.7% drop in residential values while commercial values went up, largely due to the CL&P project and the growth in Storrs Center. Mr. Hart said approximately 60 percent of homeowners will see a decrease in taxes because the value of the median home has dropped. Five years ago the breakdown of tax revenue was 85% residential and 15% commercial; today the breakdown is 77% residential and 23% commercial.

Mr. Birkenruth asked what the prediction would be for the residential/commercial split 3-4 years from now. Mr. Hart replied that he estimated that residential would be 70% and commercial would be 30%, and in ten years residential would make up 65% and commercial would be 35%.

## **5. Review and Approval of FY2015-2016 Budget**

Finance and Administration Committee Chair Tom Callahan addressed the Partnership's FY2015-2016 proposed budget as recommended by the Committee at its April 23 meeting. Mr. Callahan said the proposed budget for FY2015-2016 is \$265,000 in revenue from the same sources as previous years (Town, UConn, membership). At this point, there is no significant contribution expected from the property owners in Storrs Center.

Mr. Callahan said the budget estimates \$295,622 in expenses with the deficit covered by the Fund Balance. He said historically, the Partnership has not used all the funds budgeted.

The Finance and Administration Committee is also recommending a 5 percent salary increase for the Executive Director. Ms. van Zelm is recommending a 2 percent increase for the staff as well as a one-time \$500 stipend for the Communications and Special Projects Manager and a one-time \$300 stipend for the Office Assistant.

Ms. Friedland moved and Paul McCarthy seconded the motion to approve the FY2015-2016 budget. The motion was approved.

## **6. Review and Discussion of Partnership Mission and Funding Structure**

Mr. Bacon led the discussion on the direction of where the Partnership should be heading in the future. The funding structure may change. Ms. van Zelm provided background on these issues.

There was discussion of whether the mission of the Partnership should be modified. The current mission states that the Partnership will actively assist with the community and economic development of Four Corners, King Hill Road, and other areas that may be identified by the Town or UConn. Ms. van Zelm asked the members if the focus should remain on Storrs Center.

Mr. Bacon asked Mr. Hart and Mr. Shapiro what the Town Council considers to be the role of the Mansfield Downtown Partnership. Mr. Hart reported that the Town Council hasn't discussed the future role of the Partnership in detail. He suggested that the focus should be on Storrs Center for the immediate future and the Partnership could look for future opportunities as they arise. Mr. Shapiro concurred that the focus for the near term should be Storrs Center.

From UConn's perspective, Mr. Kirk stated that Storrs Center should be the focus so that it can remain successful.

Ms. Friedland said that with the resources at hand and taking on the management of the Nash Zimmer Transportation Center, the focus of the Partnership should be on Storrs Center.

Mr. Bacon noted that the current mission places a greater emphasis on the management of Storrs Center.

Mr. Hart suggested a revision to the mission to reflect the change to Downtown Storrs from Storrs Center to incorporate a focus on the entire downtown. There can be a reference to future development of Four Corners, but he was not sure about the relevancy of King Hill Road.

Mr. Callahan suggested that there was likely not a role for the Partnership at King Hill Road. He suggested that the Partnership be invited in by the Town to assist in other areas of Town such as Four Corners rather than propose that the Partnership take the lead.

He agreed that Storrs Center needs to be the continued focus and there is more to do in terms of making sure the area is marketed and tenanted properly.

*Brid Grant left the meeting.*

The Board also discussed the structure of the Board and Partnership funding. Mr. Birkenruth suggested that there still be a role for the property owners even if they are not prepared to serve on the Board of Directors. He asked Ms. van Zelm about how other structures work. Ms. van Zelm said ideally and traditionally, property owners serve on downtown organization boards and play a large role in directing their mission.

Mr. Hart said there should be seats on the Board for both tenants and owners. Currently, the Storrs Center tenants of the Co-op Bookstore at Storrs Center and Subway are represented on the Board.

Mr. Hart said that the Town Council, as a funder of the Partnership would want to reserve some seats for the Town Council, as would UConn.

Mr. Callahan mentioned that bipartisan support has been integral to the Board and the organization. All agreed that it would be helpful to have minority representation from the Town Council on the Board.

*Toni Moran arrived.*

Mr. Bacon asked that the Board come to some consensus on the Mission Statement.

After discussion, Mr. Simpson made a motion to delete the second sentence from the current Mission Statement. Mr. Birkenruth seconded the motion. Mr. Hart suggested that a committee finalize revisions to the Mission Statement. Ms. van Zelm said the question of substituting Downtown Storrs for Storrs Center still needs to be addressed. The motion was approved with an abstention by Ms. Moran. The draft revisions read as follows:

*The Mansfield Downtown Partnership seeks to foster the continued development and management of Storrs Center – a vibrant and economically successful mixed-use downtown at the heart of our community. ~~The Partnership will actively assist with the future community and economic development of Four Corners, King Hill Road, and others areas identified by the Town of Mansfield and the University of Connecticut.~~*

Ms. Moran said that the Advertising and Promotion Committee will take on the task of revising the Mission Statement.

With respect to the funding structure of the Partnership, Mr. Bacon said the funding structure currently consists of primarily three sources:

UConn	\$125,000	
Town	\$125,000	
Dues	\$12,000 - \$20,000	(there has been a decline in dues in the last few years)

Mr. Bacon said it is important to look at other sources of funding moving forward.

Mr. Jones said he was in favor of revising the dues structure. He said that putting out a product to attract members and dues would be the best solution. What are they getting for their membership? How do we attract more members? Is altruism a good enough reason to attract members? He welcomed suggestions on how to provide meaningful benefits to being a member.

Mr. Rogers said he felt that a funding mechanism that moves away from dues needs to be established.

*Mike Kirk left the meeting.*

Mr. Callahan said that in the beginning it was very important to have members to show support for the concept of Storrs Center. Perhaps there could be a program similar to Husky Bucks that would be good for the retail tenants, and a benefit to receive as a member.

Mr. Birkenruth said that financial support should graduate to a different structure. It is important to include the property owners, who are benefiting greatly from Storrs Center, in the financial structure.

*Matt Hart left the meeting.*

Ms. Moran suggested that funds could be raised for specific programs – members would financially sponsor an event on a yearly basis. This way the member would receive tangible benefits for its membership.

Ms. Friedland mentioned the Main Street presentation from a few months ago in which communities were doing fundraising to pay for their operations. The Brew Fest in Waterbury was one of the main examples. Could the Advertising and Promotion Committee review this concept?

*Sarah Delia left the meeting.*

Mr. Simpson cautioned that business owners are already paying fees to the property owners for marketing so they may be hesitant to pay any additional fees/assessment. Mr. Rogers agreed. Mr. Simpson said local management of marketing would be an advantage.

Mr. Callahan said there was not one solution but that a variety of funding sources need to be assessed (i.e., property owners, membership levels, sponsorships, etc.)

Mr. Bacon asked Mr. Jones about whether discounts at downtown businesses would be an incentive for people to become members. Mr. Jones said that would work but the businesses

would need to commit to fund that discount. Mr. Jones will discuss options with the Membership Development Committee.

*Paul Shapiro left the meeting.*

## **7. Four Corners Sewer and Water Study Advisory Committee Update**

Ms. Moran said there was no report.

## **8. Report from Committees**

### Advertising and Promotion

Ms. Moran said the student group ATION is now working on a video in the fall to promote the downtown.

The Town Attorney is still reviewing the proposed ordinances and policies for the Town Square.

### Business Development and Retention

Mr. Rogers said the Committee did not meet last month.

### Finance and Administration

Mr. Callahan had no further report.

### Membership Development

Mr. Jones reported that membership stands at 210 members for a total of \$13,505 renewing and new members. Committee members are making follow-up calls for members who have not renewed yet.

### Nominating Committee

There was no report.

### Planning and Design

Mr. Bacon said the Committee had met with Dale Cutler, the architect for Educational Playcare, and Keith D'Angelo, the builder, to review their Sustainability Guidelines checklist. For the most part, they comply with the Guidelines and will come back in the fall with a final report once the building is completed.

The Board recognized Mr. Birkenruth for his great contributions to the Board as this was his last Board meeting.

**9. Adjourn**

Mr. Callahan made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Jones seconded the motion. The motion was approved and the meeting adjourned at 5:55 pm.

*Minutes taken by Cynthia van Zelm and Sarah Delia.*